



May 12, 2003
National Women's Check-Up Day

More Information About *Cancer*

Cancer is the second leading killer of American women. When combined, lung, breast and colorectal cancers are estimated to kill more than 137,000 American women in 2003.

Lung Cancer

- ❖ Since 1987, lung cancer has been the top cancer killer among American women, with an estimated 68,200 deaths in women expected in 2003.
- ❖ About 90% of all lung cancer deaths among U.S. women smokers are attributable to smoking. Exposure to "second-hand" smoke also increases the risk of lung cancer in non-smoking women.
- ❖ The best way to prevent lung cancer is to never smoke or stop smoking.

Breast Cancer

- ❖ Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in American women and the second major cause of cancer death. An estimated 39,800 deaths in women are expected in 2003.
- ❖ The exact causes of breast cancer are unknown. Risk factors for breast cancer include increasing age, personal or family history of breast cancer, alcohol consumption, certain breast changes, genetic alterations, estrogen, dense breast tissue, and obesity after menopause. Breast cancer is also more likely in women who do not have children, have a first child after age 30, women who began menstruation before age 12, took hormone therapy for long periods of time, and women who completed menopause after age 55.
- ❖ Women ages 20-39 should perform monthly breast self-examinations (BSE) and have a clinical breast exam (CBE) by a health care provider every 3 years. Women age 40 and older should perform a BSE every month, and should have a screening mammogram and a CBE by a health care provider every year.

Colorectal Cancer

- ❖ Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in American women. An estimated 74,700 new cases of colorectal cancer in women and 28,800 deaths in women are expected in 2003. It is sometimes called a silent killer because a person can have no symptoms at the start of the illness.
- ❖ The exact cause of most colorectal cancer is unknown. Risk factors include age (over 50), a diet high in fat and calories and low in fiber, a history of polyps, a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, smoking, inactivity, obesity, and inflammatory bowel disease.



National Women's Health Week



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- ❖ At ages 50 and older, women should get:
 - A yearly fecal occult blood test AND/OR
 - A flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years (with fecal occult blood test is preferred) OR
 - A colonoscopy every 10 years OR
 - A double-contrast barium enema (DCBE) every 5 years (if not having colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy)
 - A digital rectal exam with each screening (sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, or DCBE)
- ❖ It is also important to maintain a healthy diet that is low in fat and high in fiber.



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